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CATTLE, FOOD IN STORAGE AND FARM LABOR

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U.S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by Jack Towers, Agricultural Marketing Service, broadcast in the Department of Agriculture's portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Thursday, January 15, 1942, by stations associated with the Blue Net Work of the National Broadcasting Company.

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BAKER: The big job facing farmers all over the country, right now, is the task of producing food to win the war. For a slant or two on the progress of this "task," we turn to Jack Towers of the Department's Marketing Service.

TOWERS: Right, John. Here in my hand, I have the Department's very latest word regarding cattle on feed -- food in cold storage, and our farm labor situation.

BAKER: Sounds like something we all should know. First, Jack, tell us what's happening in our cattle feed lots.

TOWERS: On the whole, John, farmers are feeding slightly fewer cattle than they were last year on January first. -- But, with the exception of last year, they are feeding about as many cattle as they have in other years.

BAKER: Most of the cattle feeding is going on in the Corn Belt, I believe.

TOWERS: Yes, but folks in the corn belt isn't feeding quite as many cattle as it did a year ago -- especially so in the eastern part of the Belt. In some of the areas in the extreme western part they are feeding more cattle than they did last year -- that's the case in South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas.

BAKER: It looks to me as though there's been some shift in cattle feeding within the Belt itself.

TOWERS: Right, Less cattle feeding in the east -- more in the western part of the Corn Belt.

BAKER: Speaking of "western" -- what's the feeding situation in the Western states?

TOWERS: In the group of 11 Western states cattle being fed for market is going along at about the same rate it did last year. There's a big increase in cattle feeding in Colorado; slight increase in some of the other states -- and decreases in a few.

BAKER: --but the overall total is still about the same as a year ago.

TOWERS: Yes. -- for the Western states. For the country as a whole slightly fewer cattle on feed than a year ago.

BAKER: --Now, what does the Department have to say about food in cold storage.

TOWERS: Well, John, we have a reasonably good back log of food in cold storage. The warehouse operates as a sort of "food bank" for us to draw upon when
(over)

the fresh food supplies are inadequate. At present supplies in cold storage aren't as heavy as they have been. The stocks of apples, shell eggs, frozen and cured pork, and lard are well below the stocks a year ago. On the other hand, we have more cold stored pears, frozen fruits and vegetables, butter, cheese, frozen eggs, poultry, and cured beef.

BAKER: More than a year ago, that is.

TOWERS: Yes. -- Storage plants are going in pretty heavy for frozen vegetables these days. Quick freezing is a rather new development -- from nothing a few years ago to almost a million pounds of fruits and vegetables at the beginning of 1942.

BAKER: All right, Jack -- now, what about our farm labor?

TOWERS: Generally speaking, farm wages are sharply higher than a year ago.

--higher even, than in last October. The farm wage increases were most pronounced in New England, the East North Central states and the Pacific Coast region. Maybe you notice that these are the areas where the industries are busy producing war materials.

BAKER: Yes, and I emagine the competition for workers is pretty stiff in those sections.

TOWERS: Yes, the farmers have to offer higher wages than usual to keep the workers on the farm.

BAKER: Higher farm wages aren't the usual thing this time of the year, are they, Jack?

TOWERS: No, this is usually the slack period. Farm work right now, is mostly chores -- but farmers, everywhere, are giving their livestock extra special care, because of the higher prices for livestock and livestock products. That takes work. Then, too, farmers are anxious to keep the help they have - that's another reason for higher wages.

BAKER: How many folks are working on our farms these days?

TOWERS: On January first, over 8 and a half million workers. That's a little more than were on farms a year ago -- and about a million less than were busy on December first. According to crop correspondents, the supply of farm labor is low. --much lower than a year ago. On the other hand, the demand for these workers is greater than last January. And that's the reason for the higher wages at this time.

BAKER: So, Jack, to sum up our discussion, we'll remember that the number of cattle on feed is a little smaller than last year, but equal to most other years. We have a good supply of food in cold storage, and farm wages are much higher than a year ago, because the supply is less and the demand is greater.

TOWERS: That's nice "summin!" John.

